

The WEST PARK CHRONICLE

The Community Newspaper for West Park Spring 2010

www.westparkresidents.org.uk

Annual General Meeting

West Park Centre, 24th March 2010, 7:30 pm

The AGM will be held in the Rehearsal Room at the West Park Centre. Agenda items include, Lawnswood school, Parking, and The future of the West Park Centre.

Local councillors have been invited, and so have representatives of Lawnswood School and the Police.

If you're unable to attend but would like to make a comment please contact Doug Kemp by phone (0113 2758808) or email (westpark.residents@ntlworld.com).

We hope you will accept this invitation to meet other local residents to discuss issues which affect our community. West Park Centre is on Spen Lane opposite Butcher Hill and has lots of car parking.

New Generation Transport

Although planning is still at an early stage, proposals are currently being prepared for an improved public transport system which will operate on the A660 Otley Road. The scheme could have a big impact on the area so it's vital that residents get involved.

As things stand, big layout changes will be needed at the West Park roundabout, including multiple traffic lights, to enable the trolley-bus to swing onto the central reservation heading towards the Ring Road.

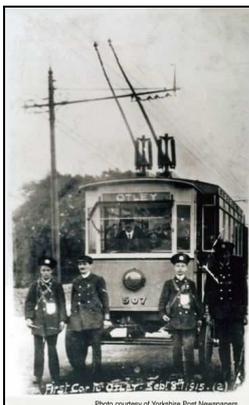


Photo courtesy of Yorkshire Post Newspapers

Access to both An-caster Road and Kep-storn Road will be affected and owners of properties directly adjacent to Otley Road might well feel nervous about their front gardens.

There's more on this in



the section *Impact of NGT on West Park* on page 4.

Although this project has a long way to go before funding and approval, *now* is the time for residents to look at and comment on the proposals.

You can keep up-to-date on the progress of NGT at <http://www.ngtmetro.com/>, and you can find some dissenting views on the project here <http://newgenerationtransport.com/>.

Parking and the Highways Board

After the controversial decisions by the Highways Board late last year regarding the proposed Residents Parking Zone, a public meeting was arranged by WPRAs and others in January to allow residents to discuss the issues.



The meeting was well attended, with 44 residents from Ancaster and Kepstorn Road taking part in a spirited discussion on parking problems, and how to improve things further.

Discussions afterwards between three WPRAs members and council officials revealed that the latter remain convinced that, within the context of what is feasible, the scheme broadly addresses the issues raised by residents, ward councillors and WPRAs.

A ray of hope is that after the scheme is established (probably in March or April) it will be reviewed after approximately 3 months and then at 6 months. The re-

views will assess how the scheme is working and what might or can be done to improve it.

Therefore the message to residents is: *once the Residents' Parking Zone is in place, it's vital that any problems are promptly reported to Highways so they can be considered by the review.*

We have a promise that any review will take place in term-time to ensure what should be an obvious requirement: that student traffic is included in the review.

From the proposals and the decision of the Highways Board, it's clear that despite the lobbying of local residents, WPRAs, and ward councillors, the area is still considered an overflow car park for Leeds Metropolitan University.

The meeting demonstrated that many residents feel that Council strategy and planning are at fault in allowing the University to proceed as it has done, and that the University is at fault for its total lack of consideration and consultation with residents about their transport policies.

Parking and LMU

WPRAs has been in contact with Leeds Metropolitan University in an effort to encourage them to tweak their on-campus parking and diminish the bad reputation they have acquired over the last two several years. The AGM will include an update on this initiative.

WPRAs has also linked with the Weetwood, Glen Road, and Churchwood Resi-

dent Associations for joint discussions with the University on the parking problem.



So far there has been one meeting, with another planned for March. Whilst this initiative is unlikely to turn back the clock on parking, the first meeting was positive and may eventually lead to something useful.

West Park Centre

As we've mentioned in previous circulars, the future of the West Park Centre (WPC), run by Education Leeds, is uncertain. This is because it needs repair and because Northern Ballet Theatre (NBT), who currently use 40% of the space, will move to new premises in the autumn of 2010. The

council believes that something has to be done and that there are three main options:

- Fully repair (estimated cost £2.2 million), with the work split into several phases.



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- Demolish part, and improve the rest
- Demolish completely and re-locate users to other suitable facilities (assuming they exist).

The Council's Strategic Asset Management section has been asked to report and their survey has identified necessary work with cost estimates. It should now be contacting existing users to assess their use of the facilities at WPC.

Retention of the Centre in some form is highly favoured by the councillors for Weetwood and Kirkstall, WPRA, Spen Hill Residents Association, Moor Grange Action Group. Councillors for the Inner North West Area (which covers this part of the city) also support this.

Factors relevant to a decision:

- Local community groups already use WPC and West Park has few other community resources.
- The Centre is a major focus for music and youth music for the whole city. Losing this centre could lead to many of these activities withering.
- It is heavily used during the day and in the evening.
- Especially valuable features are the large hall and rehearsal room, together with the ample parking and easy access to the Ring Road and other routes.

- We have it on good authority that there are many groups who wish to use the WPC but cannot because of space limitations, and that there is already demand for the space to be released by NBT.
- WPC may not be everyone's idea of an architectural gem but it exists and it works.
- Any partial demolition should retain the rear car parking spaces, otherwise the surrounding streets will suffer the same fate as those around Leeds Metropolitan University's Beckett Park campus.
- A legal covenant exists that restricts use of the site (and some of the adjacent streets) to educational purposes only, but it's not known whether this would withstand a determined legal attack. If it did not, then the council might consider lucrative redevelopment too tempting to miss. So there's a potential risk of unsuitable development such as student flats, or the kind of student teaching facility being built in Headingley.

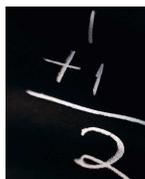
WPRA supports development of a business plan to ensure that West Park retains the Centre as both a community resource and an asset for the City as a whole.

WPRA does not support commercial use of the site but would be happy to see the site shared by say a community health centre, STEP, or similar, if that would help make the project viable.

The AGM will provide an opportunity for residents to express their views.

Lawnswood School

Last year's impression that things were improving in terms of anti-social behaviour by pupils has proved to be short-lived. Despite the new extension to the school dining facilities there appear to be just as many pupils leaving the premises at lunchtimes as before.



Worryingly, incidents reported to WPRA

this year now include assault, in addition to the usual damage to property.

The School still seems determined to keep all school gates (large and small) open during the day, providing a choice of exits for truants.

We have invited representatives from the School to speak at the AGM, so if you wish to raise any issues related to the School, do please try to attend the meeting on the 24th March.

Impact of NGT on West Park

A response to one resident's concerns by Dave Haskins, Assistant Director, Rapid Transit, West Yorkshire Metro by email on 21-09-2009.

Concern:

Is it true that the NGT plan involves closing the junction between Otley Road and Kepstorn Road?

Response

"The NGT plans as shown at public consultation did include closing Kepstorn Road at its junction with Otley Road. The road closure was proposed to allow the northbound trolleybus stop to be located away from shop frontages and avoid interfering, as far as possible, with existing uses of those shop forecourts. In addition, closure assisted with the operation of the junction, which is proposed to be signalised to assist trolleybuses and provide better pedestrian crossings. However, we are developing options to keep Kepstorn Road open, at least in one direction, whilst reconsidering what the impact would be of keeping it open in both directions. Any road closures or one-way sections will be thoroughly investigated as part of scheme development".

Concern:

Kepstorn Road provides the main access route between the two sections of the West Park suburb. Closing it would artificially isolate the two sections of West Park even more than at present as well as increasing the traffic burden on Ancaster Road.

Response:

"Closure of Kepstorn Road would put more traffic

on Ancaster Road. For this reason we are revisiting the design to avoid the closure and investing effort in design and assessment to explore this fully (see also the response to the next point)".

Concern:

Ancaster Road is very congested when Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU) is in session because of street parking by students and staff. If this road were to be the main access to the suburb it would become an intolerable bottleneck for residents and their visitors.

Response:

"Should closure or one-way operation remain in the design going forward, the assessment work will include surveys to understand how much traffic would be affected on both Kepstorn Road and Ancaster Road. This would then be tested in detailed computer simulation models to understand what the impact is likely to be and how the design can be altered to minimise this impact. We are aware of the issue with student parking and whilst as part of this project we cannot completely solve this particular issue, we will have at least some indirect influence over it. For example, we are planning NGT stops by Churchwood Avenue to attract as much LMU demand as possible and we may also be able to introduce waiting restrictions to reduce indiscriminate parking near the Otley Road. A more comprehensive solution - perhaps including a Controlled Parking Zone with residents / short term parking bays - would need to be pursued as a separate initiative. We will keep this issue under review through our liaison with the LCC Highways Area Traffic Management team, but in the meantime we would suggest that this ongoing issue be pursued through your local councillor".

Good Neighbours

It's been a long cold winter and with this in mind, WPRA is happy to support the work of STEP, the registered charity providing support for local residents who are over 60. If you think a neighbour could benefit from STEP please give Wendy Moore a call on 2757988, or email her on step.2.step@btconnect.com. All referrals are treated in total confidence.

Thank to all members for their support during the past year and for helping WPRA provide a voice for the community when dealing with local issues

West Park Fields

The **Annual Litter Pick** is being organised by the West Park Fields Group to take place on Sunday 28th March at 10:00 am. All volunteers will be very welcome and are asked to meet in the front car park at the West Park Centre.

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Subscriptions are now due for 2010, and a subscription form is enclosed with this Newsletter. The subscription remains at £3 per household.

